

History Zone Out

Winter 2003

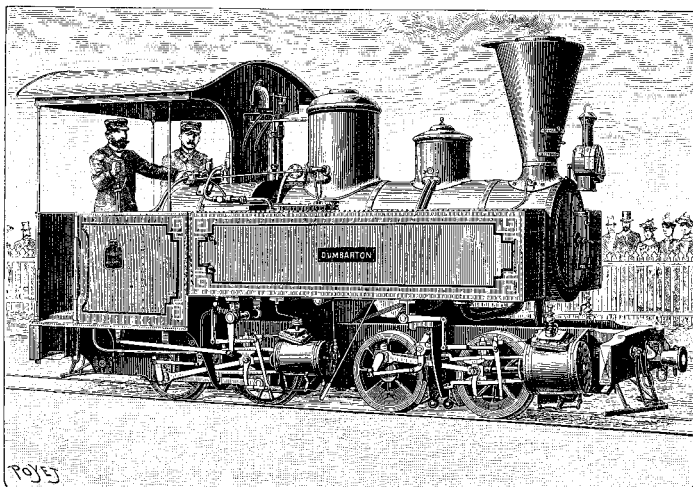
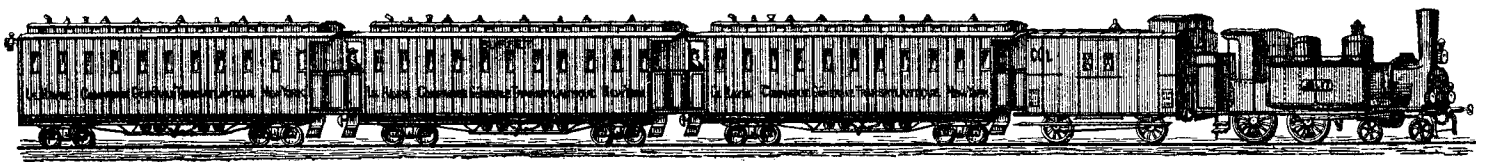
Railroads in the 19th Century

Kentucky's first railroad, the Lexington and Ohio, was established in 1830. In 1834, the railroad connected Lexington and Frankfort, and in 1851 it reached Louisville. Around 1850, the Louisville and Nashville Railroad received a charter. In nine years, the L & N Railroad connected the two cities by passing through Bowling Green and many other small towns. More railroads were built to connect towns in central and western Kentucky and to link Kentucky towns to Ohio and Tennessee. By 1860, Kentucky had almost 600 miles of rails.

At first the new railroads used horse-drawn cars. Very soon, steam engines replaced horses to pull the railroad cars. Many people preferred to travel by railroad rather than by roads. Train travel was much faster than travel by stagecoach or carriage. For example, when the L & N opened, it covered the 185 miles between Louisville and Nashville in 10 hours, when it would have taken 30 hours to travel by stagecoach!

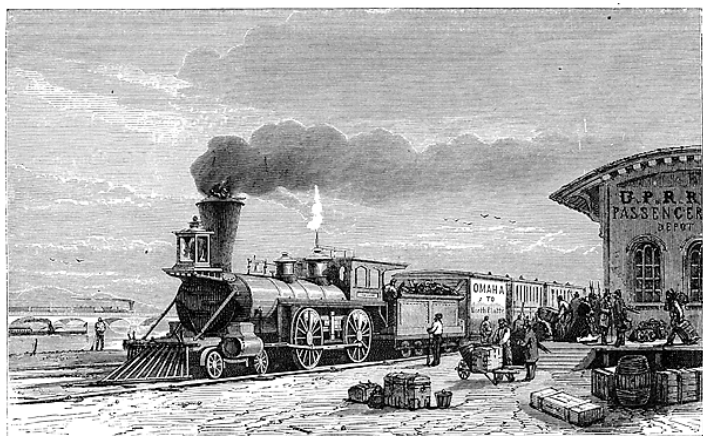
During the Civil War, no new railroads were built, but the war proved that railroads were a good way to carry supplies over long distances. Both the Union and Confederate forces used railroads to transport goods like food, clothing, guns, tobacco, and cotton. After the Civil War, many old railroads had to be rebuilt and new railroad lines were added.

In the early 1800s, most railroads were built in central and western Kentucky. Eastern Kentucky had fewer railroads until after the Civil War. Many of these railroads were built to reach the area's rich resources of coal, iron, and timber.



STOP!

At first, trains had to be stopped with hand-operated brakes. Brakemen moved from car to car to apply brakes to stop the train. These brakes were too slow to work in an emergency. In 1887, new brakes went into passenger and freight trains. These brakes allowed the train's driver to slow all the train's cars at the same time.



How did trains go?

All steam engines work in basically the same way. Fuel, usually wood or coal, is burned. The heat from this fire is used to boil water and turn it into steam. The pressure of the steam moves a piston which makes the wheels turn.

The engine's driver controls the amount of pressure the steam creates. Increasing the pressure makes the train go faster, and decreasing the pressure makes the train go more slowly. A safety valve releases steam if the pressure gets so high that it is dangerous.

Eventually, in the 1940s, diesel engines began to replace steam engines.

Want to learn more or ride a train? This web site lists railroad museums and train excursions around Kentucky:
<http://www.webunionstation.net/US/ky.html>

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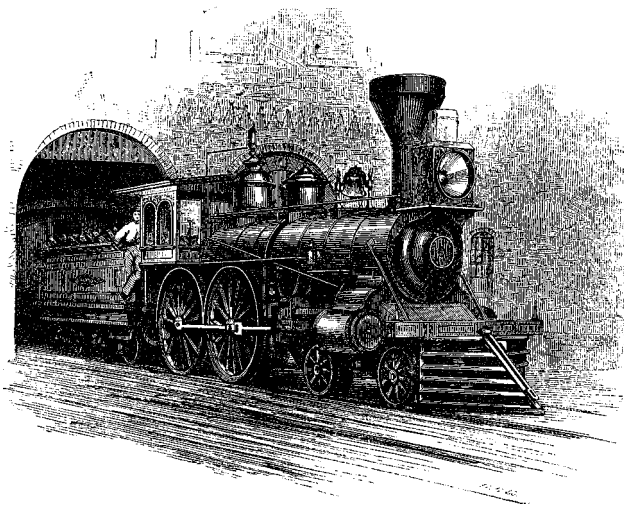


What did you say?

Many jobs have their own slang languages. Here are some words and phrases that American railroad workers used in the 1800s.

CAPTAIN—Conductor
 BAKEHEAD—Locomotive fireman
 CORNFIELD MEET—Head-on collision
 DOUSE THE GLIM—Extinguish the lantern
 HEAD END—Front end of a train
 HOG—A locomotive
 HOGGER or HOGHEAD—Engineer
 LI ZARD SCORCHER—Dining-car chef
 SHACK—A brakeman

Make up a story using these words. Tell the story to a friend and see if she understands you!



A Railroad Hero

Casey Jones was a locomotive engineer. His real name was John Luther Jones, but he was nicknamed "Casey" after the town of Cayce, Kentucky, where he lived when he started working on the railroad. In April 1900, Casey was the engineer of the *Cannon Ball Express* traveling through Mississippi. As the train rounded a bend in the tracks, Casey saw a freight train stopped on the track ahead. He ordered his fireman to jump and stayed in the locomotive to apply the brakes to lessen the impact. People believe that Casey Jones's bravery was the only reason no passengers were killed in the crash. A famous song, *The Ballad of Casey Jones*, was written about the event.